

AN INTRODUCTION TO W.M.A.F



WEST MICHIGAN ANARCHIST FEDERATION

The following text was written by the Anarchist Federation and formatted into this booklet by the West Michigan Anarchist Federation.

The West Michigan Anarchist Federation is an organization consisting of anarchists throughout West Michigan focused on distributing informational resources and engaging in methods of direct action. We are loosely connected to the Anarchist Federation of Europe in that we follow their organizational strategies, their principles and beliefs in addition to networking with a variety of different Anarchist Federations on an international scale. In short, we exist to build strong communities based on a respect for autonomy, respect, trust, and mutual aid. We seek to challenge all unjust hierarchy and offer the resources to our communities to aid them in building a better world.

We encourage all people throughout Michigan and the United States as a whole to get involved in the anarchist struggle

To get involved in the anarchist movement in Michigan email [*wmaf@riseup.net*](mailto:wmaf@riseup.net).

To connect with the broader Anarchist Federation visit [*afed.org.uk*](http://afed.org.uk).



Who We Are

As anarchists we are members of the working class who are conscious of the class struggle and who strive for full freedom and equality. This form of society will only work through the voluntary practice of self-organisation and mutual aid which we try to undertake in the here and now. Being an anarchist means not only throwing off the chains of hierarchy and coercion and striving for personal freedom but also taking responsibility for our actions where they affect others, making ourselves accountable to those we chose to work with, and practising solidarity with other people in struggle. We believe that in order to get from our current society to a world free of exploitation and oppression there is a need for revolutionary organisations. This is the basis of the Anarchist Federation. We are committed to building an effective organisation which has a collective identity and works towards the common goal of anarchist communism. We believe that such a collective identity must be based on free association and respect for the autonomy of the individual. We value the diversity of our members as we continue to develop our ideas in the light of new developments in the world and from our experiences of struggle.

What We Want

The AF works for the creation of an international libertarian communist movement. We believe this movement cannot be created without building a specific anarchist communist organisation. We believe that for social revolution to be successful it will require the activity of this revolutionary organisation as a part of the working class, while rejecting any idea that it acts as a self-appointed leader.

What We Do

While being a member of the AF should not take over our entire lives, and personal circumstances make different levels of activity possible for different people, we are not a passive fan club for anarchy. It is hoped that all members

will contribute in some way both to the development of our ideas and to our activities, both locally and throughout the federation, as and when they are able.

THE AF HAS A NUMBER OF VITAL ROLES TO PERFORM IN ORDER TO REACH OUR GOAL WE MUST:

Support resistance against capitalism, state, and other oppression where it exists, and attempt to spark it where it does not.

Produce information and analysis against capitalist society and argue the case for anarchist communism.

Be the memory of the working class by making the lessons of past gains and defeats widely known.

Be a forum for debate and discussion between all elements of the revolutionary working class.

Work to understand the developments in our society and deliver a coherent communist response to them.

Seek to win the leadership of ideas within the working class. Intervene and co-ordinate our actions in the workplace and the community.

Work to build a global anarchist movement as part of the International of Anarchist Federations.

How We Organize

For an anarchist organisation to remain non-hierarchical and non-authoritarian it is essential that roles and responsibilities are distributed evenly. For federation-wide officer roles, we operate a formal structure of delegation and direct democracy with recallable delegates, meaning that if someone is not fulfilling responsibilities they can have those tasks passed on to someone else in a non-judgemental and supportive way for the good of the organisation. Many roles are informal and temporary, however, and it is hoped that members will also fulfil these as best they can and in an accountable way. One of the key ways to support the organisation is to anticipate something that needs doing and take some responsibility for seeing that it is addressed.

The organization is based on the following fundamental criteria:

Federalism

The AF is a decentralised organisation made up of individual members who form into groups based on location. We have no leaders or central decision-making body and the direction of the organisation is decided upon by its members. Members come together regularly to develop theory, strategy and tactics through debate and discussion, aiming for participation of all members in decision-making such that effective consensus can be reached. Most decisions are made at Federal Delegate Meetings. Those who cannot attend these meetings can mandate any other member to act as their delegate to bring their positions to these meetings to ensure that their opinion is included.

Political Unity

The AF is based on a common set of aims and principles, with its structure de-

tailed in the membership handbook. Before joining, a potential member must agree with the outlined aims and principles of the organisation. In addition, we may adopt policies and analyses that are the result of discussion and elaboration by all the members. As these will be developed collectively, it is expected that they will reflect the views of the whole organisation.

Members may propose changes to these structures, but it must be the result of a genuine change of view emerging from new ideas and experiences since their joining the organisation. When an individual joins, it is expected that they join as a result of genuine agreement with the political and organisational principles of the AF. As membership is sponsored by a group or regional secretary it is their responsibility to ensure that new members fully understand these documents.

Tactical Unity

The AF seeks to act in a co-ordinated way, developing strategies and tactics through discussion and debate which members are expected to implement where appropriate.

Collective Responsibility and Solidarity

Members must not act so as to undermine the federation but instead must seek to support the federation in practice and show solidarity for other members.

Free Association and Autonomy

The individual does not subsume their identity into the collective. A member is one who has chosen to associate with others and retains their autonomy. If a member or group does not agree with policies, strategies or tactics adopted by the federation once they have become members, then they do not have to implement these decisions and may express their disagreement.

As anarchist communists we fight for a world without leaders, where power is shared equally amongst communities, and people are free to reach their full potential. We do this by supporting working class resistance to exploitation and oppression, organise alongside our neighbours and workmates, host informative events, and produce publications that help make sense of the world around us.

AIMS & PRINCIPLES

1. The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of revolutionary class struggle anarchists. We aim for the abolition of all hierarchy, and work for the creation of a world-wide classless society: anarchist communism.

2. Capitalism is based on the exploitation of the working class by the ruling class. But inequality and exploitation are also expressed in terms of race, gender, sexuality, health, ability and age, and in these ways one section of the working class oppresses another. This divides us, causing a lack of class unity in struggle that benefits the ruling class. Oppressed groups are strengthened by autonomous action which challenges social and economic power relationships. To achieve our goal we must relinquish power over each other on a personal as well as a political level.

3. We believe that fighting systems of oppression that divide the working class, such as racism and sexism, is essential to class struggle. Anarchist communism cannot be achieved while these inequalities still exist. In order to be effective in our various struggles against oppression, both within society and within the working class, we at times need to organise independently as people who are oppressed according to gender, sexuality, ethnicity or ability. We do this as working class people, as cross-class movements hide real class differences and achieve little for us. Full emancipation cannot be achieved without the abolition of capitalism.

4. We are opposed to the ideology of national liberation movements which claims that there is some common interest between native bosses and the working class in face of foreign domination. We do support working class struggles against racism, genocide, ethnocide and political and economic colonialism. We oppose the creation of any new ruling class. We reject all forms of nationalism, as this only serves to redefine divisions in the international working class. The working class has no country and national boundaries must be eliminated. We seek to build an anarchist international to work with other libertarian revolutionaries throughout the world.

5. As well as exploiting and oppressing the majority of people, Capitalism threatens the world through war and the destruction of the environment.

6. It is not possible to abolish Capitalism without a revolution, which will arise out of class conflict. The ruling class must be completely overthrown to achieve anarchist communism. Because the ruling class will not relinquish power without their use of armed force, this revolution will be a time of violence as well as liberation.

7. Unions by their very nature cannot become vehicles for the revolutionary transformation of society. They have to be accepted by capitalism in order to function and so cannot play a part in its overthrow. Trades unions divide the working class (between employed and unemployed, trade and craft, skilled and unskilled, etc). Even syndicalist unions are constrained by the fundamental nature of unionism. The union has to be able to control its membership in order to make deals with management. Their aim, through negotiation, is to achieve a fairer form of exploitation of the workforce. The interests of leaders and representatives will always be different from ours. The boss class is our enemy, and while we must fight for better conditions from it, we have to realise that reforms we may achieve today may be taken away tomorrow. Our ultimate aim must be the complete abolition of wage slavery. Working within the unions can never achieve this. However,

we do not argue for people to leave unions until they are made irrelevant by the revolutionary event. The union is a common point of departure for many workers. Rank and file initiatives may strengthen us in the battle for anarchist communism. What's important is that we organise ourselves collectively, arguing for workers to control struggles themselves.

8. Genuine liberation can only come about through the revolutionary self activity of the working class on a mass scale. An anarchist communist society means not only co-operation between equals, but active involvement in the shaping and creating of that society during and after the revolution. In times of upheaval and struggle, people will need to create their own revolutionary organisations controlled by everyone in them. These autonomous organisations will be outside the control of political parties, and within them we will learn many important lessons of self-activity.

9. As anarchists we organise in all areas of life to try to advance the revolutionary process. We believe a strong anarchist organisation is necessary to help us to this end. Unlike other so-called socialists or communists we do not want power or control for our organisation. We recognise that the revolution can only be carried out directly by the working class. However, the revolution must be preceded by organisations able to convince people of the anarchist communist alternative and method. We participate in struggle as anarchist communists, and organise on a federative basis. We reject sectarianism and work for a united revolutionary anarchist movement.

10. We have a materialist analysis of capitalist society. The working class can only change society through our own efforts. We reject arguments for either a unity between classes or for liberation that is based upon religious or spiritual beliefs or a supernatural or divine force. We work towards a world where religion holds no attraction.

SAFER SPACES

Our Policy in Brief

This policy applies to all attendees of Anarchist Federation hosted events, meetings, online spaces (forums, blogs and social networking pages of AF groups), publications or communications as well as at all times between members (both online and in person). All members of the federation will aspire to act in accordance with this policy in their relations with others (both members and non-members) and are expected to abide by and be held accountable to this as members of the federation.

If you feel unsafe in an AF space due to somebody else's behaviour, then please contact any member of the AF, or our Membership Secretary on membership@afed.org.uk. They will then use this document to guide us on the appropriate actions to take. If you wish, your complaint will be kept confidential and your identity secret as much as we are able to do so.

If you have been subjected to violence, sexual assault or sexual harassment, the perpetrator will be asked not to use AF spaces while the process is ongoing. If they are a member of the AF, their membership will be suspended until the matter is resolved. The process will be survivor-led, you will be able to choose a mediator and you will not be expected to see or speak with your attacker if you do not wish to do so.

For complaints that do not involve violence, we encourage both/all parties to engage with our Conflict Resolution procedure, and will provide mediation if required. See our Conflict Resolution and Survivor-led procedures for details of

how these processes work.

We define the following as abusive behaviours which are not tolerated:

Physical abuse

1. Violence and threat of violence (unless in self defence)
2. Use of force and threat of force (unless minimal to protect people or a space being used collectively)
3. Rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment

Non-Physical abuse

1. Verbal abuse (insults or aggression towards an individual)
2. Oppressive language (insults or generalisations about a marginalised group of people)
3. Emotional and psychological abuse (bullying, isolating and 'gaslighting')
4. Harassment (behaviour made abusive by being repeated, persistent & unwelcome)
5. Written abuse (any of the above in written form)

Our Members Handbook (pdf) contains our policy in full. This includes an expanded outline of our political reasoning behind this policy and a detailed look at how members will take action when concerns are raised.



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